



REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

MINUTES JUNE 2, 2021

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Harford County Councilmanic Redistricting Commission meeting was held in Council Chambers, 212 S. Bond Street, Bel Air, MD on June 2, 2021. It was called to order at 6:03 PM by Mustafa Sidik, Chair. All members were in attendance.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Erik Robey made a motion to approve the minutes from May 18, 2021. Wayne Goddard seconded. The minutes were approved with a unanimous vote.

3. SPEAKERS

a. CAROL BRUCE, CHAIR OF HARFORD DEMOCRATIC CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Ms. Bruce said it is important to educate the public about redistricting because district lines determine representation. She said there should be diversity, accountability, and fairness throughout the process, beginning with being open and transparent and allowing for public engagement. Ms. Bruce recommended the website, *All About Redistricting* and the book, *A Citizens Guide to Redistricting* by Professor Justin Levitt.

She feels that districts should be compact with communities of interest together and be established to provide genuine opportunities for political parties to be representative of the County as a whole. Ms. Bruce said the Democratic Central Committee will be happy to work with the Commission. The presentation was opened for questions.

Mr. Robey asked Ms. Bruce if she had any specific recommendations. Ms. Bruce said the Democratic Central Committee would like concentrate on the municipalities of Havre de Grace and Aberdeen. Mr. Robey asked if she knows of any municipalities that have two districts; Ms. Bruce said her Vice Chair could speak to that. Mr. Goddard asked if she could point to a specific area that she feels has been gerrymandered to the disadvantage of people of color. Ms. Bruce said no, not at this time. Mr. Goddard asked that, if during her research, she finds anything like that, the Commission would very interested in being

advised. Ms. Bruce noted how the map changed drastically from the 2001 to 2011 Redistricting Commission reports. Ms. Bracknell asked if Ms. Bruce could recommend an avenue that the Commission could pursue in educating the public? Ms. Bruce suggested town halls.

Mr. Sidik asked Ms. Bruce if she had any specific methodology that she would use; Ms. Bruce said she has not gotten that far. She said the Democratic Central Committee will always have someone here at the Commission meetings. Mr. Thornton suggested having groups like the Democratic Central Committee and others provide proposed maps to the Commission for them to consider.

b. JESSICA BLAKE, CHAIR OF REPUBLICAN CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Attending with Jessica Blake was Linda Norman, Vice Chair. Ms. Blake applauded Harford County for trying to keep redistricting nonpartisan. She said to keep in mind that according to the Supreme Court's ruling, Congressional District 6 is gerrymandered by partisan process. Ms. Blake stated that racial and ethnic factors should be taken into consideration, but the Republican Central Committee believes that the Commission should rely first on natural and other obvious boundaries. Community of interests should be considered. Harford County elected officials should continue to represent both urban and rural interests, including our longstanding agricultural region. She suggested the Commission review the comments being made regarding the school redistricting plan to gain insight into how the citizens feel about their communities. She said requests have been made to have the Commission's community input sooner rather than later. The Republican Central Committee requests that the technology used to create their maps be made available to the public through electronic means. Ms. Blake said that in Florida, they used an app that allowed community input and allowed citizens to follow the mapping. She thanked the Commission and said she is available to them. The presentation was opened for questions.

Mr. Thornton asked Ms. Blake if it was her intention to submit proposed maps to the commission for their consideration. She said they can do that. Mr. Goddard asked if there any area that you think needs attention focused on or would that be encompassed in the maps that they are going to supply. Ms. Blake said they are more interested in seeing the numbers and keeping the boundaries along natural boundaries and not just drawing a line. Ms. Bracknell asked if Ms. Blake knew of anything the Commission could do for specific outreach. Ms. Blake said just making people aware that councilmanic redistricting is happening, because she is not sure that the people are aware because they are focused on the school

redistricting.

Mr. Robey stated that, since data will not be forwarded until later this summer, he is looking at the filing deadline in February. He requested the position of the Republican Central Committee regarding candidates filing and the potential impact of redistricting. Ms. Norman said they are moving forward and hoping the lines will not change much. Mr. Thornton asked what is the outcome if the boundary lines haven't been resolved by the filing deadline. Mr. Kearney stated the Board of Elections said there is talk of pushing back the primaries. We are operating under the deadline of October 1, 2021 to present to the Council. Mr. Thornton asked what if we are unable to meet the October 1 deadline. Mr. Kearney said the census bureau will release figures in August, then the incarcerated individuals will have to be added back to their home county address, which could take up to a month. Mr. Sidik said it is important to get the public feedback and the timeline is looking very tight. Ms. Norman said both the County and State are redistricting so candidates are also waiting for the State redistricting to be completed.

Mr. Sidik asked Ms. Blake if she believes that only the natural boundaries should be followed. She said roads and streams are natural boundaries, but the biggest concern should be not cutting portions out of other districts to go to another district when it does not follow a natural line.

4. COMMISSION BUSINESS MEETING

Wayne Goddard proposed a "Goals and Purposes of the Committee and Key Components and Guiding Principles" document. Mr. Goddard read the document into record and a copy is attached to these minutes. The topic was opened up for comments. Mr. Thornton commended Mr. Goddard for crafting the document. He stated we should allow time for the public to comment and then we can adopt it as a guiding document for the Commission. Ms. Bracknell thanked Mr. Goddard for creating it. She said the Commission is in a unique situation this year because of truncated time but we still need to make the changes that need to be made even if it makes it harder. She said we do not want to be bound by precedent. She added that the community input and outreach is needed, and the human factor should always be on our minds. Mr. Sidik said we should have a period of time for comment on the proposal. He asked if it would be appropriate to post the document on the Redistricting webpage. Mr. Kearney said we could put it on the website. The Commission should finalize the document at the next meeting. Mr. Robey would like a little more information on ghost precincts before the proposal goes public. Mr. Goddard said his research shows that ghost precincts appear and disappear as the county grows, so he suggested to post the proposal as it is and then vote on it at the next meeting.

Mr. Sidik provided a schedule to the Commission members. Mr. Thornton said he believes they should have the resources of the County government to help them to market this initiative. He said we need to create a distinction between the school redistricting and this redistricting. Mr. Goddard agrees with Mr. Thornton that they need more excitement generated. Mr. Sidik asked if there are any specific groups the Commission wanted to target. Mr. Thornton said the NAACP and the Caucus of African American Leaders. Mr. Bracknell said the League of Women Voters. Mr. Thornton asked if we can leverage this opportunity to get a level of citizen input by contacting the person who does the marketing for the County. Mr. Robey said the Republican and Democratic Central Chairs were a big help. He thinks it's important to have a citizen comments portion at each meeting. Mr. Thornton said he would support that recommendation, assuming the Commission has done a good job at marketing. Mr. Sidik said he sees the groups listed on the schedule as vehicles to marketing. For example, the NAACP might have access to people that we do not have access too. They may have input on how to reach "unreachable" constituents.

Mr. Sidik asked what medium we should use to educate the public. He said the main medium being used today is social media. Mr. Thornton thinks that social media should be just one platform in the overall media strategy. He believes we should rely on the expertise of the County's media expert. Mr. Sidik asked Mr. Kearney about using the County's resources. Mr. Kearney said those departments are under the County Executive. The County Council has no social media staff. Mr. Sidik asked what it would take to get their help. Mr. Kearney said he can ask the County but, in the meantime, the Council does have an agenda distribution list to use. Ms. Bruce said she was at the last meeting because of word of mouth. Mr. Sidik said he agrees they need to use a multi-pronged approach. He suggested the Commission write a formal letter asking for the Executive branch to assist the Commission in their work. Mr. Thornton agreed. Mr. Kearney said once the letter is drafted to send it to the Council office. Ms. Bracknell said she agrees with the social media platform. An audience member asked the Commission to introduce themselves at every meeting and also asked if the minutes will also be posted online. Mr. Kearney said that once they are approved, the minutes will be posted on the website.

Mr. Thornton asked if all three municipalities will be invited to the June 30th meeting. Mr. Sidik said yes. There was discussion about where it will be held. The Council Chambers should be available on that date.

Mr. Thornton asked if they could create two calendars, one with the original deadlines and then one with what deadlines would be if they cannot make the original timeline. Mr. Kearney said he understands that it is unlikely the Commission will meet the October 1, 2021 deadline but that it is still the target.

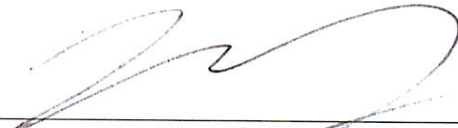
The president of the Harford County Delta Chapter and secretary of the Panhellenic Council spoke from the audience. She said the Panhellenic Council represents all the Black sororities and fraternities in the County. She thinks her organization would be a great mechanism to use to get information out to the community. Assuming you can secure a minimal budget to develop this asset, she believes they could use this avenue to get the word out regarding councilmanic redistricting.

Another individual in the audience said he thought faith-based communities and Harford Community College would also be a good resource for getting the word out.

The Commission introduced themselves.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:07 PM.

Approved  _____
Chairperson 6/30/21
Date